



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Animal and  
Plant Health  
Inspection  
Service

**Wildlife  
Services**

FY 2004

## WILDLIFE SERVICES—KENTUCKY

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### USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Kentucky

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on Kentucky Wildlife Services (WS) for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists respond to these requests with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Kentucky has rich and abundant natural resources and is home to a diverse mix of urban and suburban settings, rural environments, forests, and agricultural lands. This ecological variety gives the State a remarkable diverse range of wildlife species. Kentucky WS works with Federal and state officials, industry, and individuals to protect property, agricultural and natural resources, and the quality of life for residents of Kentucky. The program also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases; guards many natural resources, such as watersheds and timber from beaver damage; and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific projects conducted by Kentucky WS include, managing roosting blackbird and starling damages in urban and suburban areas; conducting sampling and monitoring for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and rabies; and managing damage caused by beavers, pigeons, Canada geese and other wildlife.

### Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be



safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

**Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports**—Every year, lives are endangered worldwide and billions of dollars are expended when wildlife damage aircraft. Bird strikes with aircraft cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$500 million annually and pose devastating hazards to passengers and flight crews. Kentucky is home to one of the country's busiest airports (with more than 13.5 million passengers annually) and it is located along the Mississippi and Atlantic flyways for migratory waterfowl. WS biologists are working with airport officials at all major and regional airports in Kentucky to manage wildlife populations on and around airfields. Strike rates caused by wildlife have been greatly reduced through habitat modification and WS enhanced wildlife damage management programs directed at several species including waterfowl, raptors, and blackbirds.

WS is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) continually conducts research to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports and develop management tools to reduce these hazards. In addition to providing on-site evaluations, comprehensive wildlife hazard assessments, and airport expansion and design consultations to minimize threats, WS also trains airport personnel to reduce the risk of wildlife collisions with aircraft.

### Addressing Residential and Industrial Property Damage Caused by Roosting Blackbirds

—European Starlings, red-winged blackbirds, brown-headed cowbirds, and grackles congregate from late fall through spring in large night-time roosts that often contain thousands of birds. The majority of these roosts are located in urban, industrial and residential areas on utility structures and trees. Blackbird problems are the most common wildlife complaint received by Kentucky WS. The noise and accumulation of droppings on landscaping, vehicles, houses, ornamental plants, and sidewalks causes property damage and is a health concern to

#### Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting public safety and property from Canada goose, pigeon starling, blackbird, and other wildlife damage
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Managing damage caused by beavers to natural resources, timber, agriculture, and transportation infrastructure
- Protecting municipal utility structures, residential property, and livestock from vultures
- Protecting public safety from wildlife diseases

#### Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Kentucky:

- Improving damage management methods for aquatic rodents
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Reducing Canada goose damages through translocation
- Managing problems caused by starlings, blackbirds, and vultures
- Managing wildlife transmission of rabies
- Improving assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management

residents. Bird droppings are corrosive to paints, metals, and other building materials, and pose health hazards to workers and the public. For example, large concentrations of blackbirds roosting in an industrial site or residential area may create environmental conditions that support the development of a fungal disease called histoplasmosis. This disease can be transmitted to people exposed to the area and can cause severe respiratory problems. Kentucky WS assists dozens of cities, industries and residential communities annually by dispersing roosts with pyrotechnics and assisting property owners in vegetation and habitat management. WS also provides bird harassment equipment and technical support.

#### Addressing Residential Property Damage from Canada Geese—

Canada geese problems are the second most common wildlife complaint received by Kentucky WS because the birds frequently reside in residential areas. Concerns include feces contaminated water, accumulations of droppings on sidewalks, beaches and golf courses, and aggressive geese that bite or attack children and the elderly. The majority of these geese live in urban and suburban areas adjacent to schools, parks, and residential areas benefiting from an abundant food supply, water, and few predators. The majority of the birds in Kentucky are non-migratory, residing in these areas throughout the year. In addition to providing technical assistance and educational programs for the public, WS removes flocks of problem geese that cause property damage, jeopardize water quality, and threaten public safety. WS removes about 500 resident Canada geese from golf courses, residential communities, and recreational areas each year in Kentucky.

**Protecting Multiple Resources from Beaver Damage—**WS provides direct assistance throughout Kentucky to remove beavers that damage timber, agricultural crops, natural resources, roadways, culverts, sanitation lines, and property. The majority of damage is caused by flooding from beaver damming activity, however gnawing and cutting of ornamental trees and shrubs is also a major concern around parks and lakefront properties. Historically, beaver were considered a valuable natural resource and an extremely important part of the economy. In recent years, however, little demand for beaver products has resulted in a decrease in trapping, and subsequent increase in beaver numbers. Beaver now occupy nearly all watersheds in the State, and State-wide population trend estimates are increasing.

To address many of these problems, Kentucky WS enters into cooperative relationships with Federal, state, city and county governments, soil and water conservation districts, private landholders, and others with beaver problems. Funding comes from State, county, Federal, and private sources. Kentucky WS provides assistance on a variety of properties, using an integrated management approach that includes water level manipulation, exclusion, population reduction, and the safe and effective use of explosives by certified WS personnel. On average, over \$1 million per year in losses to timber, agricultural crops, and property are prevented due to the Kentucky WS beaver damage management program.

#### Major Cooperators:

- U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
- Tennessee Valley Authority
- Fort Campbell
- Louisville International Airport
- Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport
- Waste Management
- Toyota
- Louisville Gas and Electric
- United Parcel Service
- KY Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources

## Looking to the Future

In Kentucky, human health and safety, aviation safety, urban wildlife and beaver damage are a concern for wildlife managers. This is particularly true at airports, where increased travel through Kentucky airports, combined with population and range increases of numerous species of birds and wildlife has created a greater need for airport managers to deal with threats posed by wildlife. Additional attention must be given to this very specialized area of work.

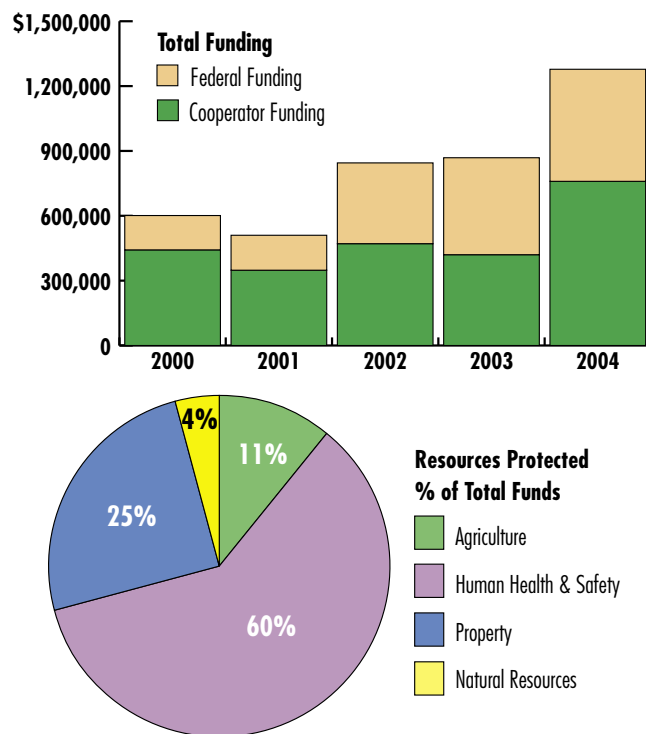
A second issue related to property damage and economic loss involves the increased need to manage beaver damage caused by the State's rapidly growing beaver population. Damages to timber, roadways, drainage structures, property, and flooding concerns caused by beavers in Kentucky have increased the public's awareness of these issues. Expanding habitat and the lack of recreational trapping have contributed to these damages. These problems have created an increased need for beaver damage management throughout Kentucky.

Increased urbanization and expansion into formerly rural areas coupled with rising waterfowl, white-tailed deer, coyote, beaver, and raccoon populations has led to a rise in wildlife conflicts with people. Other urban conflicts involve threats to human health and safety and damage to homes, buildings, lawns, utility structures, and property from vultures, woodpeckers, Canada geese, and skunks.

The State also has a need to manage the transmission and spread of raccoon rabies. Kentucky WS is currently participating in our national effort to prevent the westward spread of raccoon rabies, and, hopefully, to eliminate rabies from the United States.

## Kentucky Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and Local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.



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